

United States Senate

May 18, 2017

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

Congratulations on your confirmation as United States Trade Ambassador (USTR). I supported your nomination and look forward to working with you to grow our economy, expand access to new markets, stop American jobs from being shipped overseas and support Montana families.

I write today because trade plays a vital role in protecting and creating American jobs and our nation is currently facing several significant trade challenges. As you take office as America's chief trade negotiator, I respectfully ask you to prioritize expanding market access for our farmers and ranchers, establishing a new Softwood Lumber Agreement with Canada, resolving the solar trade dispute with China, and ending Canada's unfair treatment of American grown wheat.

With the United States withdrawing from the Transpacific Partnership (TPP), it is critical to immediately seek new ways to expand market access for our farmers and ranchers. The TPP contained provisions that would have lowered trade barriers across Asia and opened the door for our farmers and ranchers to export their world-class products. With commodity prices down, accessing new markets is crucial to the livelihood of our farmers and ranchers and the strength of our rural communities. We must ensure our producers do not lose their international market share or miss opportunities to expand their customer base.

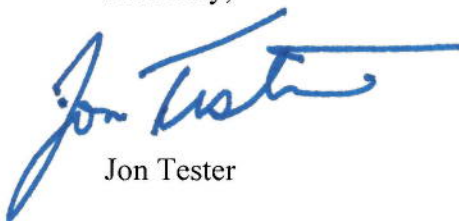
Another issue that requires immediate attention is the Softwood Lumber Agreement with Canada. I am pleased to see America's trade enforcement process is working on behalf of the men and women within our timber industry. The initial announcement on countervailing duties on imported Canadian Lumber is a positive step toward leveling the playing field for American manufacturers. The trade enforcement process, however, is long and arduous. Our industry needs market certainty now, so they can continue to hire hardworking Americans to produce lumber. That's why it remains important to finalize negotiations on a softwood lumber agreement that ensures fair competition.

Last week's announcement that China will begin to import American beef is welcome news for our ranchers and an important win for rural America. I am grateful that the administration responded to my requests to address beef exports with China when President Xi visited earlier this year. While maintaining a focus on beef, I ask that you also turn your attention to the solar trade dispute with China. Several years ago, China placed duties on American solar-grade polysilicon products that effectively shut the United States out of China. The Chinese duties are related to a broader dispute on solar goods. Resolving this dispute will have a positive effect on high-paying manufacturing jobs in Montana and beyond.

Lastly, I ask for your commitment to press Canada to end its discriminatory treatment of American grown wheat. If a Montana farmer wants to ship wheat north to Canada, the farmer will see their wheat be automatically downgraded to feed wheat when it crosses the border, regardless of the quality or variety of the product. This is counter to America's policy of fairly grading Canadian wheat based on the characteristics of the grain. This trade imbalance with Canada is unacceptable. It is time to put an end to practice that clearly harms American farmers.

Successful trade is fundamental to growing our economy and creating jobs in rural America. I stand ready to work with you and the Administration on these issues. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester